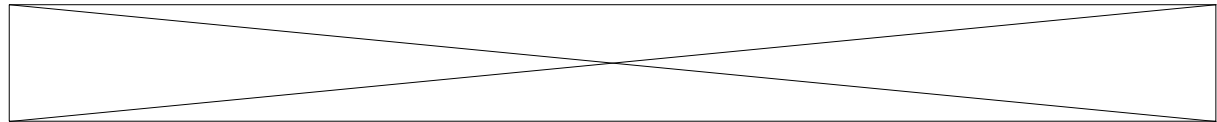


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On the same day that alum **Kemba Walker** took the University of Connecticut into the NCAA Tournament as a top seed, the Rice Raiders showed that they were much more than just last year's All-American point guard, topping Christ the King 67-58, Sunday in the CHSAA Intersectional championship at Fordham.



S. Davis

CTK's Sean Johnson checks Durand Scott

Royals' spurt that cut the Rice lead to two. The Raiders, however, scored the last five points of the half to go into the break with a 29-22 edge.

The teams traded baskets for most of the third quarter, but Rice was eventually able to string together eight straight points and go up 45-31 with 1:50 left in the period. The Raiders pushed their lead to 50-35 before a transition lay-in by **Dominykas Milka** pulled Christ the King back within 13.

The Royals had one more push in them.

Corey Edwards, scoreless through the first three quarters, began to get more assertive. He fed Milka for a lay-up that turned into a three-point play, and then Edwards scored on a take to the hoop. After Scott and Milka traded buckets, Edwards confidently canned a three off a Johnson steal to slim the Rice lead to 52-47.

After a Rice timeout, Edwards hit a runner to cut the lead to three. Scott, however, drained a long jumper, and after Johnson split two free throws, Stukes put Rice ahead 57-51 with a drive and score.

But **Maurice Barrow** tipped in a miss for Christ the King and Davis once again came up big, sinking a three-pointer from the right corner to bring the Royals within one at the 2:45 mark.

Rice's **Durand Scott** scored 27 points and shut down the Royals' **Sean Johnson**, as the Raiders built a 15-point lead and held sway after a fourth quarter comeback by Christ the King.

Johnson drained a three-pointer from the right corner just over a minute into the game, giving the Royals a 3-2 lead, and it looked as if the star guard was on his way to a big day. But that was the easiest shot Johnson would see all game.

Rice scored the next five points to pull ahead 7-3, but Christ the King held the Raiders scoreless in the final 2:44 of the first period, and the Royals finished the quarter up 10-9.

A putback by **Ishaan Davis** 12 seconds into the second quarter gave Christ the King its biggest lead of the game, but Rice responded in a hurry. Scott canned two three-pointers and **Jermaine Sanders** and **James Stukes** each hit one trey during a 14-0 Rice run that put the Raiders ahead 23-12.

Davis, an unheralded role player, singlehandedly kept Christ the King in the game, scoring eight straight points during a 10-1

Sharpshooting Scott Arias answered with a three for Rice, but Edwards came right back with a long ball of his own for the Royals.

Scott dropped in a runner to put Rice back up by three with 1:05 remaining. Davis then once again found himself open for a huge three-point attempt, but this time he couldn't connect. Christ the King corralled the rebound, and Barrow got a good look at another three, but he misfired as well.

Scott and Sanders went 7-for-8 from the free throw line in the final minute to ice the game for the Raiders.

The Miami-bound Scott kept Rice in control nearly throughout, and his 27 points were easily a game high.

"I just kept my composure and played smart," Scott said, "I'm just happy to be in this moment."

A moment Scott is positive his team earned every step of the way. "Without even seeing everybody else's practices, I know for sure we worked the hardest," the confident guard said flatly.

Shane Southwell, a junior who transferred to Rice from CHSAA cellar dweller All Hallows, was also deeply appreciative of the team's accomplishment. "My whole sophomore year, I basically only won two games," Southwell said. "Now I'm winning the biggest game in the city. It made me want to cry a little bit."

The victory was the sixth CHSAA championship for Rice coach **Maurice "Mo" Hicks**, an unprecedented achievement. "He's the best coach in the city," Southwell said.

In addition to Scott's 27, Sanders added 11 for the Raiders. Davis led Christ the King with 16 points, while Johnson was held to a quiet 15. Edwards chipped in 10, all of which came in the fourth quarter.



S. Davis

Scott does an up and under on Dominykas Milka